

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 2308

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS UNSC LE MO
SUBJECT: MOROCCO AND UNIFIL

REF: (A) BEIRUT 1593, (B) STATE 098231

1. REFTEL B RASIES THE POSSIBILITY OF MOROCCO AND OTHERS AS POTENTIAL "GENDARME" CONTRIBUTORS TO UNIFIL. WE DO NOT HOLD REFERENCES CITED IN REFTEL B, AND ARE THEREFORE SOMEWHAT IN THE DARK AS TO DEPARTMENT'S THINKING IN TAGGING MOROCCO FOR A POSSIBLE TROOP ROLE. HOWEVER, SOME SPECULATION ON MOROCCO'S LIKELY ATTITUDES FOLLOWS.

2. ALTHOUGH THE GOM AMBASSADOR TO AMMAN DID RAISE ON MARCH 16 THE POSSIBILITY OF A GOM CONTRIBUTION TO UNIFIL, WE VIEW HIS INITIATIVE AS STRICTLY PERSONAL. THERE HAVE BEEN NO ECHOES HERE. IN POINT OF FACT, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS WHY WE BELIEVE MOROCCO WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO INSERT ITSELF INTO THE SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION:

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-- MOROCCO'S FORWARD POSITION ON THE SADAT INITIATIVE HAS STRAINED ITS RELATIONS WITH FELLOW ARABS AND LOST IT SOME ARAB SUPPORT ON THE ALL-IMPORTANT SAHARA ISSUE. ITS PARTICIPATION WOULD RISK FURTHER ALIENATING SOME WHOM IT HOPES TO TURN AROUND, NOTABLY SYRIA AND IRAQ.

-- THE GOM HAS TRADITIONALLY NURTURED A "SPECIAL" RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PLO. A "POLICE" ROLE AIMED AT

CONTROLLING PLO FORCES WOULD INEVITABLY RESULT IN FRICTIONS WITH THAT ORGANIZATION. ALTERNATELY, TO APPEASE PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS, MOROCCAN PARTICIPANTS MIGHT NOT CARRY OUT THEIR ROLE WITH ADEQUATE DILIGENCE.

-- ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW MANY PERSONNEL WOULD BE INVOLVED IN EACH CONTINGENT, WE NOTE THAT MOROCCO HAS PRIVATELY DECLINED IN THE PAST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ARAB DEFENSE FORCE AND TO SEND AID TO CHAD, CITING ITS SAHARA SECURITY PROBLEM IN EACH CASE. ACTUALLY, ITS REAL REASON IN BOTH CASES MAY WELL HAVE BEEN RELUCTANCE TO COMPLICATE RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARABS.

3. IN SUM, WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT GOM WOULD PARTICIPATE IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, EVEN IF OTHER ARAB STATES, SUCH AS SUDAN, WERE TO PARTICIPATE. IF, FOR REASONS NOT CLEAR TO US, THE DEPARTMENT DECIDES TO GO AHEAD WITH ITS RECOMMENDATION OF MOROCCO, WE SUGGEST THAT THE INITIATIVE COME FROM THE UN AND NOT US. WE ALSO SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT, IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT MOROCCO SHOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER SENDING A CONTINGENT, THE QUESTION OF TAKING ALONG U.S. ARMS MIGHT WELL BE POSED. THIS COULD FURTHER HIGHLIGHT WHAT THE MOROCCANS CONSIDER CONTRADICTIONS IN U.S. POLICY, IN VIEW OF OUR CURRENT ATTITUDE WITH RESPECT TO MOROCCAN USE OF U.S. ARMS IN THE SAHARA AND MAURITANIA, AS WELL AS OUR PREVIOUS POSITIONS ON ZAIRE AND CHAD IN THIS REGARD.

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